



Charlotte Mason's House of Education,
Scale How, Ambleside, UK, 2009

The **Charlotte Mason Digital Collection** is a not-for-profit database created in 2009-2011 to assist scholars, researchers, educators and students to discover, use, and build upon the Charlotte Mason Collection of archives, journals and books housed in the Armitt Library & Museum (UK). To learn more about this database or to search the digital collection, go to [The Charlotte Mason Digital Collection](#).

Your use of images from the **Charlotte Mason Digital Collection** is subject to a [License](#). To publish images for commercial purposes, a license fee must be submitted and permission received prior to publication. To publish or present images for non-profit purposes, the owner, Redeemer University College, must be notified at cmdc@redeemer.ca and submission of a copy of the context in which it was used also must be submitted to the owner at cmdc@redeemer.ca. Credit lines, as specified in the [License](#), must accompany both the commercial and non-profit use of each image.

Unless you have obtained prior permission, you may not download an entire issue of a journal nor may you make multiple copies of any of the digital images. Higher resolution images are available. [Low resolution (150 dpi), single copy printing is permitted: High resolution images for publication can be purchased. Please contact Redeemer University College in writing as specified in the [License](#) to request high resolution images.

While the document originals are housed in the Armitt Library & Museum, Redeemer University College owns the rights to the Digital Images (in jpg/pdf format) of the original archival documents and artifacts. The original Digital Images and database metadata are owned and maintained by Redeemer University College. Multiple images are bound together in PDF Packages. Click [here](#) to download the latest version of Adobe Reader for better viewing. In the PDF, click an image thumbnail to view it.

This project was made possible through collaboration among the [Armitt Library & Museum](#) (Ambleside, UK), [Redeemer University College](#) (Ancaster, Canada) and the [University of Cumbria](#) (UK) and with the financial assistance of the [Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada](#).

Need help? If you do **not** see a side-bar with image thumbnails:

Some of the PDF packages are large and will take some time to download. A very large PDF package may open more successfully if you download it first to your desktop. (From inside the database record, right-click on the link to the PDF package and save the link to your desktop.) Once it's on your desktop, you can open it up with a recent version of [Adobe Reader](#).

If you have a Macintosh with Safari, the default program to open PDFs is Preview, which does not open the PDF packets. Mac users need to download [Adobe Reader](#). If this cover page appears without a list of PDF files (either at the side or bottom of the screen), look for a paper clip or a menu option to view attachments. If you click that, you should see a list of the pages in the PDF package.

Viewing files with Linux: This works with the default PDF viewer that comes pre-installed with Ubuntu. While viewing this cover page in the PDF viewer, click "View" on the top toolbar, and check the box that says "Side Panel". That will bring up the side panel. The side panel will show only this cover page. Click the 'arrow' at the top of the side panel, and it will give you the option to view "attachments." If you click that, you should see a list of PDF files, which are the pages in the PDF package.



OVER-PRESSURE.*

BY T. FRED GARDNER, M.R.C.P., LOND.

IT is increasingly obvious that we in this generation live at a more rapid rate than that lived by our ancestors; that our children live in surroundings which make life more rapid in its work and nature and amid more "rush" than we their parents were ever called upon to experience when we were children.

Take for instance the stage coach and the express; twenty-five years later, the letter carried by the express and the answer returned in 48 hours; twenty five years later, the telephone and the answer while you wait—sometimes a longer time than even we care to do, so great is our hurry nowadays.

Now it has not appeared that our human frame has altered in the same proportion as the scientific aids have altered our environment. Our nervous systems have probably exactly the same number of nerve cells, neither more nor less, than our grandfathers possessed, yet surely we need more or, at all events, we use them more. If we have no more and use them more and do not stop and take stock a little of what we really can and cannot do in the way of receiving nerve impressions and giving out impressions, where will all this lead us to? Science portends still vaster changes in the future. We have now the telegraph, the telephone, soon wireless telegraphy and possibly wireless telephony; telescoping, in a new sense, when we view our friends at the other side of the earth, is promised in the near future; and all these facts and still more their possibilities bring us face to face with the truth that life will get more rushing, quicker and fuller as the years go by. Our nervous systems may be compared to the boiler of the engine, our wills represent the engineer and our bodies the machinery. If you have a machine calculated to turn out a certain production of force or material in a

* An Address delivered before the Bournemouth and Boscombe Branch of the Parents' National Educational Union, on April 30th, 1901.

given time and it is known that there is a maximum beyond which it is unsafe to go and the boiler generating the driving power of this machine has its gauge marking that maximum, and you proceed to demand more and more productive force from this machine, you call to your engineer to put on more steam and he does it; your machine does the work perhaps, but it wears out much sooner. If you still persist in over-working it and when it is already driving at full pressure demand more and yet more, only a safety valve will prevent a dire catastrophe and even then you are wearing out your machine needlessly.

Our bodies are machines most delicate in their parts, inter-connections and bearings, we drive them to their full, the social world demands more energy, we call on our engineer to put on more steam, our will drives our nervous systems to greater effort. Woe to that individual who insists on having no safety valve or having the chance of proper rest, insists on driving on, regardless of the increased wear and tear of his nervous system and the sure catastrophe which follows sitting on the safety valve or making it useless by some such manœuvre as "the rest cure," when prevention is the only, not in this case the best cure.

As a result (in my opinion) of all this, the children of to-day are as a rule a more nervous and more easily over-pressed race. True, there is still to be found the lymphatic, stolid child, too fat, too well fed perhaps, but this sort of child is exceptional. As a rule, the typical child of to-day is bright-eyed, sharp as a needle, quick to notice, quick to imitate. He must be doing something or two things, or even three things all at once. He is liable to have head-aches and easily gets a temperature, but more of this presently.

If such a bright, nervous child be sent to a school where an injudicious principal is anxious to increase his school's reputation, this child's name will figure in many of the marvellous successes obtained by pupils at this school. He is good at examinations, comes out brilliantly at the top; but only his parents and his doctor know at what cost all this glory has been obtained.

Especially is the evil of over-pressure seen when competitive examinations are held. To a keen, sensitive nature, full of pride of place, perhaps ambitious of success and loving

praise of his parents, master or schoolfellows, the temptation to overwork, to strain the too-willing horse is very great; and with a competitive examination, the wish to get a place, or even the first place, adds to the strain and mental tension; often the result is allowed to hang in the balance and remain unknown for days or even weeks, and this kind of brain tension is peculiarly liable to cause trouble.

Then in some children, home lessons are a plague and the cause of much mischief. I believe in some scholastic circles they are altogether shelved. If they can be avoided in one school, why not in all? My own opinion is that they should never be allowed. A boy or a girl goes to school from five to six hours every day, and often has to do one or two hours of home lessons at the end of the day, when he is least fitted for the memory portion of his work. The brain has to store up some remembered material until next day, and so the night's rest is disturbed and the nerve cells suffer. I would rather see the school hours lengthened, say four portions of $1\frac{1}{2}$ hours each or better still, three portions of two hours, and suitable intervals for recreation and meals, than the present arrangement for home lessons in the evening. The preparation for the day's work should be the work of the first portion of school work. At the end of the day, the work should be finished and not carried over the night. Suitable intervals should be arranged between the school hours for play and meals. It is not wise to commence a meal instantly after brain work, and brain work should not be too long without a break.

Nowadays, most schools are excellently arranged in these respects, but I would give the palm to that school which does its work without home lessons and where the preparation work is done in the normal school hours and where there are proper intervals for play between the periods of school work.

Over-pressure of children comes when these factors are not attended to. I have heard of a boy getting up at 6 a.m., school at 7 a.m., breakfast 8.15, School again 8.45 to 12.15, school at 2 to 6, then home again, and lessons to prepare at night. This boy suffered from head-aches and other nervous phenomena, and I am not surprised. He was a victim of over-pressure.

Then it is quite possible to have over-pressure in play. It

is quite right to make boys and girls athletic and harden them by suitable measures, but the long school runs which seem to be part of this hardening system are questionable blessings, or even means to this end. Even for the most stalwart, a course of good gymnasium exercises would do as much. For the average boy, they are trying and often cause so much fatigue and bad temper that their moral effect is bad rather than good, while to some of the weaker brethren—the weak-hearted and the neurotic—they are curses and productive often of irreparable injury. To send all boys on such runs, often of many miles, is wrong. To let all boys, irrespective of temperament, age, or idiosyncrasy, stay out in a blazing sun for the whole of a hot summer's day, fielding at cricket, while their seniors knock the bowling all over the field, may in some cases be very necessary to avoid molly-coddling and laziness on the part of certain young gentlemen, but here and there may be a boy whom it really injures; and medical men, not school masters or mistresses, are the better judges, which boys are which. The medical profession is quite as alive as the scholastic to the existence of the molly-coddle, the lazy gamin, the malingerer, and the other "mauvais sujets" of the schools; but when a boy comes of a neurotic parentage, or has certain tendencies to chorea or neuroses of a definite medical type, it is more than wrong to force that boy to do what another, not hampered in any way by these handicapping hereditary tendencies, is called upon to do, and can do easily and well.

Then play, even in-doors, has its dangers. Over-pressure in the matter of parties at Christmas time is constantly brought home to the medical mind at this festive season. Attacks of croup, biliousness, night-terrors and the like are sequences of too much excitement, quite as much as cold, over-eating or eating too rich food. When these attacks follow on some unusual excitement, they are often thought very little of, but they are danger signals, shewing a too ready disposition to be affected nervously, and should give pause to the parent anxious to avoid trouble in future. The constant succession of parties, not only night after night, but sometimes an afternoon party at one house, followed by another evening party somewhere else, is another source of over-pressure on juvenile nervous systems. I think that for

even the average child, a party every few days is a full allowance, but I am not sure that even this moderate allowance is not too much for the highly-strung child, whose existence is much more in evidence to-day than it was ten years ago.

Then, as to the amusements provided, romping games are essentially childlike, and there is no doubt that games like blind man's buff, musical chairs and general post have the sanctity of tradition and are very enjoyable—I enjoy them very much myself. But I would enter a protest against a party consisting wholly of such games. I have seen severe illnesses follow a Christmas party, where, with abundant hospitality and hot rooms, a good romp has been the precursor of trouble, which has not only endangered but forfeited the life of children too readily excited by far, but still excited to severe illness in this way.

To those who give parties I would recommend an alternative of the romping games with some quieter recreation, where sitting down and looking on is the order of the day. Conjuring, a magic lantern with judicious alternations of photographs with comic slides, or games which do not involve jumping up or running about, of which there are many now-a-days, almost if not quite as enjoyable as those specially needing activity.

How can you know when a child is over-excited or what are the symptoms of this over-pressure against which I have been inveighing?

Well, you do not need me to tell you what some of these symptoms are, they are plain for all to see. But of the more subtle ones, which may give you pause and time to alter your methods with a child or which perhaps give you a timely warning of what will become serious if not stopped, I would especially mention these four or five. Restless sleep, especially talking in sleep, often about the games or the school work of the day. All parents should visit their child's bed-room when they themselves retire. The refreshing calm sleep of a healthy child is a beautiful thing itself to watch. The opposite may reveal where the pressure is a little too severe. Of course gastric disturbances and other ills will make the little sleeper restless, but given no other obvious cause, restlessness and sleep-talking often give timely notice of the trouble which, if unchecked, may go on to convulsions,

St. Vitus' dance, meningitis even. Then, second, I would mention head-aches. These are such common things that people attach little importance to them, yet they are often danger signals pointing to over-pressure. Constipation may need attention, and many illnesses have head-ache as a symptom, but a child who is constantly having headaches with no obvious cause is usually living too rushed a life, or is over-worked at school, no matter how good his or her master or mistress may be. Then fidgets are another frequent sign of over-pressure. The child always on the go, unable even to sit down quietly, always pulling at this or tearing up that, restless to a degree, without the will or apparently the power to concentrate the mind on one thing at a time, or if concentrated, to keep it long on the one object. Of course I do not mean that a child is not to be a child, but there are degrees of this sort of thing, and when a child is over-pressed, it has its normal energies exaggerated to an abnormal degree, and this degree is the measure of that child's nervous power and its ability to stand strain.

Fourthly, I would say biliousness. Biliousness has so often been called liver trouble and children are so liable to over-eat themselves or eat greedily or wrongly, that it seems we can never believe it can be anything else.

Now I have often been told by anxious mothers, "Little Tommy has been very sick, he is very bilious and yet I have been so careful with his diet, I can't think what has upset him; he has had literally nothing, but so and so"—mentioning most unlikely foods to make little Tommy bilious.

Now, over and over again in such cases little Tommy has been subjecting his nervous system to over-pressure, and this has made him bilious. He has had to learn some poetry, and he played at Halma, and went to Maskelyne and Cooke's mysteries, all in one afternoon and evening; he was hurried home to a late tea and had to do a French exercise as a home lesson for to-morrow, and altogether he was a little rushed, for his uncle John came in just before he had finished tea, and took him up and down the road on his new motor car, and a horse shied at the car and almost jumped on little Tommy and he was rather frightened. However, to-morrow he will be all right, for it is a half holiday and he is going for a long bicycle run with three other boys older than himself, so he will be well looked after, and they are going to have a

paper chase first they think, and take their butterfly nets with them, so that if they do see any rare specimens, they can easily catch these, get on with the paper chase, and have tea directly they get back, as Tommy has got behind with his work, and only yesterday had a bad mark because he could not remember the twelve verses of poetry he had to learn the night he went to aunt Flora's party. Little Tommy may be bilious after the paper chase; he will probably be too over-tired to have eaten anything very bilious.

All this is intentionally exaggerated and overdrawn, but I trust it will help to make my meaning clear.

Nor is it altogether the fault of the children or their upbringing, its nature or style, but often through inherited tendencies for which they are not responsible and for which even their parents are not wholly responsible, and yet I think parents can do much to lighten the possible evils which may thus come upon their innocent offspring.

This is a Parents' Educational Union, and I think we sometimes lose sight of the fact that the sins of the fathers (and mothers) are visited upon the children to the third and fourth generation, even in this very way. How can your children be other than nervous, highly sensitive, too highly strung, when you, their parents, mother and father, lead the rushing troubled life you do?

Take the average lady of social life, who has to live through the London season just beginning. Her life from, what is in London, the early morning until what we usually call the early hours of the morning, or accurately speaking from 11 a.m. to 3 or 4 a.m., is one long rush. Engagements tread so quickly on one another's heels that there is scarce time to change her clothes, for the dresses respectively suited to the breakfast-table, the meet of the Coaching Club, the luncheon party, the *matinée*, afternoon tea, Lady So-and-so's dinner, followed by the Countess of Everywhere's At Home and Lord Someone Else's ball. This to be continued day after day, night after night, through May, June and possibly July.

Then the busy City man is not much better off, with his office work, board meeting, chairman of committee, luncheon engagement, House of Commons, dine with his wife at the aforesaid Lady So and So's, back to the House, look in at the Club, and possibly be a late comer at the ball after all.

What sort of children do these people expect to have? Calm, quiet, restful natures? Ability to stand nerve strain? Healthy children? Not long ago I heard through a medical *confrère* of the twelve-year-old daughter of one of these combinations of City magnate with Society lady, whose neuroses were so much in evidence that the young lady's toilet table was littered with little phenacetin tabloid bottles, smelling salts, recuperative dragées, pilules of the pick-me-up order which our young *débutante* was administering to herself at her own sweet will, whenever the mood suited her, or her headache was troublesome, or her neuralgia severe, or her temper irritable, or her maid unusually stupid.

Do not think, however, that this rush of life with its baneful effects is limited to the Society devotee. There is quite as much dissipation, only of another sort and called by another name, among the inveterate church-workers, district visitors and religious societies. Far be it from me to deny the value of the work done or the unselfishness of those who take up these spheres of work, often with the best of good intentions, but let me, as a medical man, warn you from the excess of zeal which transforms you into a mere rushing machine, driven from meeting to bazaar, from conference to service, from lads' brigade to penny reading, from guild meeting to district visiting, from lady's working party to parochial tea, with no time if you are a daughter to assist your mother in her arduous struggle with home domestics, with no thought if you are a mother for the training, the necessary example, the care of your own children. Shame upon those mothers and fathers who leave their children to the tender mercies—often I am glad to be able to say in no sense sarcastically, the very tender and most motherly mercy of a devoted nurse or governess—but sometimes to the very equivocal tender mercy of a hired domestic, while they, by exhausting their time, their temper and their patience with so-called good works, have only their fretted, overworked, spoiled natures wherewith to greet their children, and those children's memories of what should be sacrosanct tenderness on the part of mother and father, have only the tired fretfulness of a peevish parent or the casual kiss of an overworked father or the hasty greeting of a Society mother, to carry with them in those after years, when the memory of a true motherhood or fatherhood would have been of lasting value or even of saving grace.

And the remedy for all this? More rest, more time, more space, more quietude; less fret, less done for appearance sake, less rush, a few things done really well, a few things really known, a few thoughts for other's welfare, a better conception of what life is, what it means, what it leads to.

This advice is not up to date; it is not "smart," it is not worldly-wise, but it is the only solution of a problem which will soon rush upon us in an immensity of force I believe wholly irresistible. It has been affirmed and denied that relatively there is more lunacy than there used to be. Where experts and statistics differ I do not attempt to decide, but I have with me some of the greatest authorities of medicine and social medicine, when I affirm that nervous disorders are alarmingly on the increase. I know my profession is often looked upon askance by those who consider it a congeries of Jeremiah's, for ever warning people of wrath to come and prophesying evil from innocent things, and forbidding all living, eating, drinking, &c., &c. But if I read the signs of the times correctly, if the trend of thought among men most likely to perceive the movement is correct, we are about to realize that we are living too fast, that our nervous systems will not bear ever-increasing, ever-widening strain, and that with the demands which science and its discoveries make upon us, while in some ways the labour of man is saved, yet his nerve energies are called upon for an ever and ever increasing strain, and that a limit must be put to this or the machinery will not last its allotted span.

More rest, more leisure, fewer hours of work is not the cry of laziness, but the demand of exhausted nervous systems, unable to bear the increased tension of work thrust upon them by modern conditions. Am I exaggerating? A few years ago I met on my holiday, a stock-broker. It was after a Kaffir boom. This man for three months had been working night and day. He and his partner were City brokers, with a large business. So great was the pressure that they employed two relays of clerks. When the day shift left their office at night at 7 p.m., another set came in and worked on through the night. At 7 a.m. the original set came on duty and worked overtime before 10 a.m. and after 4 p.m., the usual hours. The partners divided the work as well as they could, but often they were compelled to do work together night and day. Result: the stock-broker I met on my holiday was a nervous wreck.

He was full of symptoms, could do nothing, scarcely write a letter, business impossible. Look around at the friends you know who are doing much the same. Are they living an enviable life, are they really satisfied with it? Will they as parents be held blameless when their children ask why they are subject to asthma, to epilepsy, to St. Vitus' dance, to migrainous head-aches, to insanity? If we wish to grapple with these evils it is useless to expect medical science to undo the evils of a past generation, at best it can palliate and partially relieve, but here and now, let us, who are parents, resolve to show our children a more excellent way. Let us leave off rushing, let us have time to think, to show our children the sunny sides of our nature, the beauties we wish them to see in life and manners and mode of thought. Let us remember they will not only hereditarily take after us, but that our lives and mode of life is impressing their consciousness. Like parent, like child. Our example is all-important. The lives we lead they will unconsciously imitate. Surely we have "rush" enough. Let us, if only for our children's sake, keep calm, and let their ideas of life be staid, deep, sincere, temperate in its best sense, wide in sympathy, but wide because intelligent and with a full knowledge, not wide in embracing a number of people or subjects and just touching them on the fringe as it were, without proper understanding or interest, because we are too hurried to discriminate, too rushed really to know.

A counsel of perfection! you will say. A hopeless ideal! Better to aim at a high ideal, and aiming, attain somewhat, than to limit one's ambition to the possible as evidenced in a world too rushed to recognise where it is leading and too hurried to be able to look beyond the immediate present, and with no hope or very little beyond. Remember, your child has stored up in its nerve cells the potential energies for a lifetime, it may be, of great usefulness to others, it may be of great distinction for itself. Do not let your child fritter away this God-like possession in the aimless vagaries of an overpressed childhood. Conserve this mighty force, educate it, show its proper outlets, direct its outgoings, but have a care whence it goes, how it goes, and remember that there are years to come, when there will be need of these stores of nervous energy which you are dissipating now over trifles thin as air.